

April 18, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Rice and Secretary Rumsfeld,

Thank you for the extraordinary opportunity to visit our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was, by far, one of the most memorable experiences of our lives.

The joint Defense and State Department mission was a remarkable journey which helped bring clarity and perspective of the difficulties young democracies face in contemporary times.

Since we are all Commanders-in-Chief of our Guard units, we truly believe that those citizen soldiers who stepped out of their contemporary lives to serve their country in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom are the most effective communicators back home concerning the facts and purpose of fighting terrorism.

As we return to our states, we will share with our constituents that America's troops are the best trained, best equipped, and best led men and women in the world. Their morale could not be higher, their purpose of mission could not be any clearer and their desire to get the job done could not be stronger. The four of us are committed to these troops and we believe America and its allies must support a united Iraq and Afghanistan so long as they have the political will to get the job done and demonstrate they are truly dedicated to democracy, freedom and a safer world.

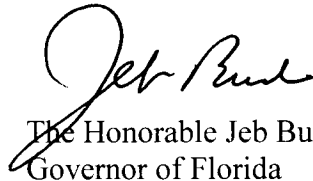
One of the more significant moments of the trip was our meeting with President Karzai and fourteen Afghan provincial governors and hearing first hand about their remarkable courage and daily struggles against terrorism and corruption. It was humbling to hear the challenges they face everyday. Each of them was passionate when thanking us for America's help to date. We all feel these meetings were of tremendous value, and only wish we could have had the opportunity to meet with our Iraqi counterparts to see if their commitment was as strong.

These trips are extremely important for every Governor, and we will encourage others to accept your invitation. Thank you again for meeting with us before our departure and for the many young American men and women in these regions who supported this trip.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mitch Daniels". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mitch" and last name "Daniels" clearly legible.

The Honorable Mitch Daniels
Governor of Indiana

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeb Bush". The signature is cursive, with "Jeb" and "Bush" written in a stylized, connected manner.

The Honorable Jeb Bush
Governor of Florida

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom Vilsack". The signature is cursive, with "Tom" and "Vilsack" written in a fluid, connected style.

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Governor of Iowa

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joe Manchin". The signature is cursive, with "Joe" and "Manchin" written in a fluid, connected style.

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Governor of West Virginia